An

ESSAY

— ON —

ABORTION

For the Degree of Doctor of Medicine

in the

Homœopathic Medical College

OF PENNSYLVANIA

— BY —

L. Augustus Bilisoly

Portsmouth City Virg.ª

Residence in this city — No. 91 South 8½ st.

Preceptor — — — Virginius B. Bilisoly —

Duration of studies — — Four Years & Two months —

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ESSAY

Abortion and its treatment

By

Lisle Augustus Bilisoly

Portsmouth Virginia

Of all the diseases peculiar to the female, there is not one more calculated to disheaten, the Physician than that of Abortion.

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Of all the diseases peculiar to the female, there is not one more calculated to dishearten, the Physician than that of Abortion.

By Abortion we mean the expulsion of the contents of the gravid uterus, before the full period of utero gestation is accomplished; the proces by which it is

perfected; like that of labour, is by the action of the uterine fibers.

This may occur any time during gestation, though more easily excited at, or before the third month, owing to the facility of the connexion between the ovum and decidua. It is more apt to come on at the beginning of each menstrual period, than in the interval, owing to the increased excitement of the gestative organs at that time.

When the foetus is expelled before it is capable of maintaining an independent existence, that is before the sixth month, it is termed Abortion.

By premature labour we imply the expulsion of the ovum before the full term of pregnancy has expired, but after the

sixth month.

All females are liable to abort, but it is more frequently found in the palaces of the rich, and those who lead a luxurious life, than in the hovels of of the poor.

The process of abortion consists of two parts — the separation of the ovum from the uterine attatchments, and its expulsion from the uterine cavity.

The separation is attended with some loss of blood, the expulsion with pain.

The embryo may be thrown off at any period of uterine gestation, the process being completed by uterine action.

The ovum may pass whole from the uterus, and this is gen-

-erally the case in the early weeks; or the membranous cyst may burst, the foetus may be expelled first, and the placenta afterwards; as usually happens at the more advanced stage.

The vitality of the ovum may be destroyed some hours, days or weeks previous to its expulsion, or it may actually be alive at the moment it is expelled.

It is a matter of very great im-portance whenever abortion is threatened, to ascertain if possible, whether the ovum be living or dead; because, if we are assured that it still retains life, it would be our duty, for the sake of its preservation, to endeavour to carry the patient on to her full period; unless, indeed, her existence were endangered; but on the contrary, if

we were certain the ovum was lifeless, there would be no object in preserving it in the uterine cavity; by so doing, we might originate many evils; the mass might putrefy, it would act as foreign body and might possibly be converted into a mole.

In the latter months, the sensations communicated to the mother by the motions of the foetus, will be our most sure guide, to determine whether the foetus be alive or not. We may acquire some information from the use of the stethoscope, but before quickning has taken place, neither of these means of diagnosis will serve our purpose.

The death of the foetus may be known by the sympathetic irritations of

pregnancy being suddenly suspended.

It often happens that a patient who has been attacked with morning sickness, regularly up to a certain day, on rising finds herself freed from this inconvenience, and it does not again appear; she considers it a fortunate occurrence, and congratulates herself that she is not any longer a subject to the annoyance.

If this cessation has been gradual, and has come on about the period of quickening, we may attribute it to a natural cause; but if it happens to be sudden, at about the second or third month, instead of viewing it favorably, we should regard it with suspicion and anxiety, because the circumstances may very likely depend upon the death of the ovum.

Abortion is generally accompanied with more or lep hemorrhage, sometimes the quantity is considerable, at others very slight.

The time occupied for abortion to be completed, may not be more than an hour, it may however occupy days, weeks and even years, before the ~~xxxxxxxx of the~~ uterus has got rid of its contents.

The expulsion of the ovum is followed by a sanguineous discharge, similar in character to the lochia subsequent to labour.

Abortion may either be considered as accidental or habitual, mental emotions or some accident which the person has suffered, or it may be habitual and the patient may abort constantly at the same

period of pregnancy without discovering any ostensible cause. When it is habitual we usually observe it to take place between the eighth and eleventh weeks.

The causes of abortion may be either immediate, pre-disposing and exciting.

The immediate cause is the contraction of the uterus, the uterine fibers, acting upon the ovum, protrude it forth in the same way that they expel the mature foetus at the end of gestation.

In many cases there are no pre-disposing causes, but the patient is subjected to one or more very evident exciting causes. A woman in a state of health, while gestation is going on, receives a fall or blow or becomes the subject of some violent mental

-agitation, these act as exciting causes and pro-
duce uterine contraction. But where we cannot
trace any evident exciting cause, we may reason-
-ably suppose that there are some predisposing
influences acting on the womans system;
and these are various and numerous, they
may be local or general.

Weakness of the uterine
organs, induced by too frequent an indulgence
in venery, by debilitating discharges such
as leucorrhœa &c or by constant miscarriages,
are perhaps the most frequent; prolapsus
uteri, diseases of the rectum and bladder are
by no means rare.

Adhesions which the uterus may have
contracted, with other organs, may be either
predisposing or exciting. If these adhesions
have taken place to any considerable extent with

the bladder, rectum or other organs. we can understand easily that the uterus cannot become enveloped so perfectly and regularly as if it was free and unshackled; it will not remain stationary while the ovum lives and grows; it is obliged to contract, and abortion must necessarily be the consequence.

An opposite condition of weakness may produce abortion, a highly plethoric condition of the system, a determination of too large a quantity of blood to the uterus may prove a disposing cause.

Of the accidental or exciting causes, some originate in the mother, and some are referable to the ovum. Those referable to the ovum are diseases in its own structure, if many of the vessels by which the ovum is

sustained, be severed from the uterus before the placenta is formed, abortion will be likely to occur, the accident may be occasioned by external force, such as falls, exercise, sudden exertions, violent concussions, straining, blows, long walks, as well as violent emotions and passions of mind, as fright, anger, grief, joy, surprise, and coughing. All these have been known to interrupt the communication between the mother and embryo.

Prolapsus or retroversion of the uterus, may cause premature expulsion of the ovum.

Diarrhoea is another cause of abortion by which it is no way unfrequent, purgatives which stimulate the rectum such as Aloes &c have been the cause of it frequently.

A syphilitic taint superadded to the new

being from either parent, small pox, typhoid and intermittent fevers also inflammatory affections may excite abortion, by depriving the embryo of life. rupture of the ovular membranes may suspend gestation and abortion necessarily follows.

A female may acquire the habit of aborting. Each occurrence predisposes to a repetition of the accident at about the same period; and after it has happened several times, it is extremely difficult to carry her through the period safely.

The prognosis is more favorable in early miscarriages, than in later ones — the discharge is the only symptom which need produce alarm unless it is often repeated.

Abortions are not un-

frequently attended by hysteritis, inflammation of the uterine veins, and some other inflammatory diseases dependent upon child-bed.

Symptoms

Loss of sympathetic feeling sickness. The earliest symptoms are chillings. followed by fever and bearing down pains; cutting pains in abdomen and loins resembling those of labour, the patient generally experiences a sense of uneasiness, langour accompanied with pains of an expulsive character, and often with hemorrhage, the stomach frequently becomes irritable and discharges its contents, the pulse is quick, skin hot, at the beginning the pains are but very slight, only at intervals and last but a short time; as the process advances they become more & more intense & frequent,

voluntary efforts are made in aid of the uterus, and ultimately the contents of the womb, or a portion of them are expelled. Sometimes the ovum is discharged with little or no pain, at others pains are described as being more severe than those of labour at full term.

Treatment-

In the management of cases of abortion, three indications are to be borne in mind; first to prevent its occurrence; secondly, to check it when threatened and thirdly; to conduct the patient safely through the process, provided it cannot be prevented or averted.

Perfect rest and quietude of body, together with the precaution not to excite the state of the mind are absolutely requisite.

The patient must be confined to one room from the commencement of pregnancy until she has quickened, in cases where abortions have occured

before, she should not be permitted to go up and down stairs; the dress should be loose.

If miscarriages have already occured the patients should retain the recumbent position for several days, until the parts have time to recover somewhat of their natural condition, and all danger of hemorrhage have ceased.

Remedies

Calc c, Bell, Sabina, Sepia, Puls. Lycpd, Nux Vom, Ars, Bry. Hyosc, Ipec, Croc s. Cin, Rhus, Lycopo, Chin, Mur & Cham.

Calcaria c

If the patient is plethoric, fat subject to very abundant menstruations, to leucorrhea, to sweeps of the breasts, colic, pain in the back, sick headache, congestion of blood to the head & lungs, to vertigo. Calc may be alternated with Bell at intervals.

Belladonna

Violent severe bearing down pains through the entire abdomen, as if all its contents would be pressed out, very profuse discharge, also with congestion to the head.

Sabina

In repeated abortions, if the pains are forcing and dragging, extending to the back and loins, profuse discharge of bright red blood, faint, sinking feeling in abdomen, diarrhoea, fever with chillings and heat, nausea and vomiting.

Sepia.

By leucorrhoeal discharge, sad melancholy, feeble, timid with easy perspiration frequent colics, May be alternated with Puls.

Pulsatilla.

When the hemorrhage is arrested

for a moment and returns afterwards with great violence, with expulsive pains, dark blood mixed with clots.

Sulphur.

If the woman is subject to pimply eruptions with itchings, disposition to constipation and hemorrhoides. It may be alternated with nux vom if there is a bearing down pain in the uterus with frequent desire to urinate.

Nux Vomica.

In sanguine, irritable temperaments, subject to dyspeptic, hepatic and gastric diseases, with constipation & hemorrhoides, where there is urging to stool.

Arnica Iron

If caused by blows upon the abdomen, a fall, an effort or any other mechan-

-ical cause which may have produced a commotion of the uterus.

Bryonia Alb.

Dark complexions, subject to affections of liver and spleen, and frequent constipation, dark discharge, congestion and dullness about the head.

Hyoscyamus.

Spasmodic affections, jerking about the limbs, restless at night, pains worse at night, delirium &c.

Ipecacuanha.

If there has been a violent hemorrhage of red blood, with colic around the navel, severe pressure upon the uterus and rectum, chills, great weakness, spasms without loss of consciousness, pale face.

Crocus Sativus.

Discharge of dark and clotted blood, increased by the least exertion, with fluttering sensation around the navel, where other remedies have failed.

Cinnamomum & Rhus tox.

Where the patient is feble, of a cachectic constitution, having a pale sallow face, very small pulse, and fear of death with loss of dark liquid blood and disposition to convulsive movements.

China.

Where the symptoms have ceased, and the patient has been much enfeebled by loss of blood, with giddiness and fainting, coldness of extremities and loss of consciousness.

Mercurius

By syphilitic taint &c —

Chamomilla.

If there are cutting pains in the abdomen, so violent as to force cries, extending from the sacrum towards the sides, and coming on at intervals as in labour, with desire to go to stool or to urinate followed by a flow of blood which is dark and fetid, with clots, weakness.

There are other remedies recommended such as Platina, Coffea, Camph, Lyc, Kali c, Ferrum metallicum, for inducating abortion.

We may possibly prevent abortion by the use of Sabina, Secale, Kali c, Lyc, Spig & Calc c.

A bandage should be applied after abortion in the same way as after labour.

The diet should be strictly atten-

- ded to by the Physician himself, not allowing warm drinks or any stimulating articles of diet to be given to the patient, for fear of hemorrhage returning; a simple nourishing diet is all that is required.

L. A. Bilisoly